

Election Assistance Commission

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request under the FOIA or of judicial discovery proceedings.

(5) Interagency or intra-agency memoranda or letters that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the Commission;

(6) Personnel and medical files and similar files, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(7) Records or information compiled for law enforcement purposes, but only to the extent that the production of such law enforcement records or information:

(i) Could reasonably be expected to interfere with enforcement proceedings;

(ii) Would deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication;

(iii) Could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;

(iv) Could reasonably be expected to disclose the identity of a confidential source, including a State, local, or foreign agency or authority or any private institution that furnished information on a confidential basis, and, in the case of a record or information compiled by a criminal law enforcement authority in the course of a criminal investigation, or by an agency conducting a lawful national security intelligence investigation, information furnished by a confidential source;

(v) Would disclose techniques and procedures for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions or would disclose guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if such disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law; or

(vi) Could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of any individual.

(b) Any portion of a record that reasonably can be segregated from the balance of the record shall be provided to any individual requesting such record after deletion of the portions which are exempt. The amount of information deleted and the exemption under which the deletion is made shall be indicated on the released portion of the record, unless including that indication would harm an interest protected by an ex-

emption in paragraph (a) of this section under which the deletion is made. If technically feasible, the amount of the information deleted shall be indicated at the place in the record where such deletion is made.

(c) If a requested record is one of another government agency or deals with subject matter to which a government agency other than the Commission has exclusive or primary responsibility, the request for such a record shall be promptly referred by the Commission to that agency for disposition or guidance as to disposition.

(d) Nothing in this part authorizes withholding of information or limiting the availability of records to the public, except as specifically provided; nor is this part authority to withhold information from Congress.

§ 9405.6 Discretionary release of exempt records.

The Commission may, in its discretion, release requested records despite the applicability of the exemptions in § 9405.5, if it determines that it is in the public interest and that the rights of third parties would not be prejudiced. The Executive Director will have the authority to determine that requested records may be released despite otherwise applicable exemptions.

§ 9405.7 Requests for records.

(a) Requests for copies of Commission records under the FOIA shall be made in writing and addressed to the Chief FOIA Officer, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 1225 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005. The request shall reasonably describe the records sought with sufficient specificity with respect to names, dates, and subject matter to permit the records to be located. A requester will be promptly advised if the records cannot be located on the basis of the description given and that further identifying information must be provided before the request can be satisfied.

(b) Requests for Commission records and copies thereof shall specify the preferred form or format (including electronic formats) of the response. The Commission shall accommodate requesters as to form or format if the record is readily available in that form

or format. When requesters do not specify the form or format of the response, the Commission shall respond in the form or format in which the document is most accessible to the Commission. In the interest of efficiency and economy, the Commission's preference is to furnish records to requesters in electronic format, whenever possible.

(c) The Commission shall determine within 20 working days after receipt of a request, or 20 working days after an appeal is granted, whether to comply with such request, unless in unusual circumstances the time is extended. The 20-day period shall commence on the date on which the request was first received by the appropriate component of the Commission, but in any event, not later than 10 days after the request is first received by the component of the Commission designated to receive requests under this part. The 20-day period shall not be tolled by the Commission except—

(1) The Commission may make one request of the requester for information and toll the 20-day period while it is awaiting such information that it has reasonably requested from the requester.

(2) If it is necessary to clarify with the requester issues regarding fee assessment.

(3) Under paragraphs (c)(1) or (2) of this section, the Commission's receipt of the requester's response to the Commission's request for information or clarification ends the tolling period.

(d) In the event the time is extended under paragraph (c) of this section, the requester shall be notified of the reasons for the extension and the date on which a determination is expected to be made. An extension may be made if it is—

(1) Necessary to locate records or transfer them from physically separate facilities; or

(2) Necessary to search for, collect, and appropriately examine a large quantity of separate and distinct records that are the subject of a single request; or

(3) Necessary for consultation with another agency that has a substantial interest in the determination of the request.

(e) If the Commission determines that an extension of time is necessary to respond to a request satisfying the unusual circumstances specified in paragraph (c) of this section, the Commission shall so notify the requester and give the requester an opportunity to limit the scope of the request so that it may be processed within the time limit prescribed in paragraph (c) of this section or arrange with the Commission an alternative time frame for processing the request or a modified request.

(f) The Commission may aggregate and process as a single request requests by the same requester, or a group of requesters acting in concert, if the Commission reasonably believes that the requests actually constitute a single request that would otherwise satisfy the unusual circumstances specified in paragraph (c) of this section, and the requests involve clearly related matters.

(g) The Commission will process requests under the FOIA based on the order they are received.

(h) The Commission shall consider requests for the expedited processing of requests in cases where the requester demonstrates a compelling need for such processing.

(1) The term “compelling need” means, with respect to a request made by a person primarily engaged in disseminating information, urgency to inform the public concerning actual or alleged Federal government activity.

(2) Requesters for expedited processing must include in their requests a statement setting forth the basis for the claim that a “compelling need” exists for the requested information, certified by the requester to be true and correct to the best of his or her knowledge and belief.

(3) The Commission shall determine whether to grant a request for expedited processing and notify the requester of such determination within 10 days of receipt of the request. Denials of requests for expedited processing may be appealed as set forth in § 9405.8. The Commission shall expeditiously determine any such appeal. As soon as practicable, the Commission shall process the documents responsive to a

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request for which expedited processing is granted.

(i) Any person denied access to records by the Commission shall be notified immediately of the denial, including the reasons for the decision and notified of his or her right to appeal the adverse determination to the Commission.

(j) The date of receipt of a request under this part shall be the date on which the Chief FOIA Officer actually receives the request.

(k) Each request received by the Chief FOIA Officer will be assigned an individualized tracking number. Requesters may call (866) 747-1471 and, using the tracking number, obtain information about the request, including the date on which the Commission originally received the request and an estimated date on which the Commission will complete action on the request.

§ 9405.8 Appeals of denials of requests for records.

(a) Any person who has been notified under § 9405.7(i) that his/her request for inspection of a record or for a copy of a record has been denied, or who has received no response within 20 working days (or within such extended period as is permitted under § 9405.7(d)) after the request has been received by the Commission, or who has received no response within 20 days after a request for expedited processing has been received by the Commission, may appeal the adverse determination or the failure to respond by requesting the Commission to direct that the record be made available or that the expedited processing shall occur.

(b) The appeal request shall be in writing, shall clearly and prominently state on the envelope or other cover and at the top of the first page "FOIA Appeal," and shall identify the record in the form in which it was originally requested.

(c) The appeal request should be delivered or addressed to the Chief FOIA Officer, U.S. Election Assistance Commission, 1225 New York Avenue, NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20005.

(d) The requester may state facts and cite legal or other authorities as he or

she deems appropriate in support of the appeal request.

(e) The Commission will make a determination with respect to any appeal within 20 working days after receipt of the appeal (or within such extended period as is permitted under § 9405.7). If, on appeal, the denial of the request for a record or a copy is in whole or in part upheld, the Commission shall advise the requester of the denial and shall notify him or her of the provisions for judicial review of that determination as set forth in 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4).

(f) Because of the risk of misunderstanding inherent in oral communications, the Commission will not entertain any appeal from an alleged denial or failure to comply with an oral request. Any person who has orally requested a copy of a record that he or she believes to have been improperly denied should resubmit the request in writing as set forth in § 9405.7.

§ 9405.9 Fees in general.

(a) *Generally.* The Commission will charge fees that recoup the full allowable direct costs it incurs. The Commission will use the most efficient and least costly means to comply with requests for documentation.

(b) *Manual searches for records.* The Commission will charge fees at the salary rate(s) (basic pay plus 16 percent) of the employee(s) making the search.

(c) *Computer searches for records.* The Commission will charge the actual direct cost of operating the central processing unit (CPU) for that portion of operating time that is directly attributable to searching for records responsive to a FOIA request and operator/programmer salary apportionable to the search.

(d) *Review of records.* Only requesters who are seeking documents for commercial use may be charged for time spent reviewing records to determine whether they are exempt from mandatory disclosure. Charges may be assessed only for the initial review (*i.e.*, the review undertaken the first time the Commission analyzes the applicability of a specific exemption to a particular record or portion of a record). Records or portions of records withheld in full under an exemption that is subsequently determined not to apply may